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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventieth year

Identical letters dated 28 July 2015 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I write to draw urgent attention to the dangerous and rising tensions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of Occupied Palestine due to the illegal actions, provocations and incitement by Israel, the occupying Power, including in particular by extremist Israeli settlers and religious zealots, against the Palestinian people, their land and their holy places. Civilian casualties continue to be caused by the violence of Israeli occupying forces and extremist settlers, and recent incidents are aggravating religious sensitivities and the fragile situation on the ground, threatening to precipitate a religious conflict and further destabilize the region, which is already experiencing unprecedented turmoil.

For two consecutive days, extremist Israelis escorted by occupying forces broke into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound (Al-Haram Al-Sharif), the third-holiest site in Islam, in Occupied East Jerusalem. They prevented the entry of Palestinian worshippers and instigated violent confrontations. In this volatile context, on 26 July, an Israeli settler woman shamefully insulted Islam's Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) with the clear aim of provoking Palestinian worshippers. This incident was caught on a cell phone camera and made public, setting off angry reactions resulting in clashes between Palestinians and Israeli extremists at the Holy Site.

In another blatant attempt to ignite tensions, a group of 70 Israeli extremists, protected by occupying forces, stormed the compound via the Moroccan Gate on 27 July. Dozens of Palestinian worshippers, as well as 19 Al-Aqsa Mosque guards, were hit with rubber-coated bullets, rods and rifle butts and suffered pepper spray and tear gas inhalation, and the occupying forces detained several Palestinians. In this regard, it must be noted that over the past two months, Israel has committed at least 184 violations against holy sites in Occupied East Jerusalem and Al-Khalil, displaying utter disrespect for its obligations under international law and disregard

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for the repeated international calls to calm the situation and defuse tensions in and around holy sites.

Concurrently, illegal actions overtly intended to assert Israeli control over the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound continue unabated. Israeli extremists and government officials persist with their provocative rhetoric regarding plans to spatially and temporally divide the compound, which must be firmly rejected. We reiterate the imperative of respect for the long-standing, historic status quo at the Holy Site, agreed to and respected by all parties for decades, and we recall the Security Council's determination that all such measures by Israel, the occupying Power, "to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the recent 'basic law' on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith".

In the light of the volatile conditions on the ground, we are compelled to again caution of the extreme, far-reaching risks of these illegal Israeli actions, provocations and incitement at Al-Haram Al-Sharif. We underscore in this regard the statement on 27 July by the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov: "Provocative actions and language carry the seed of violence and ultimately undermine the ability of worshippers of all faiths to have access to their respective Holy Sites. Respect for the status quo is in the interest of all and is essential for stability."

Israel's continued use of lethal force against Palestinian civilians is further raising tensions throughout Occupied Palestine. On 24 July, in a heinous crime reflecting the wanton force and disregard for Palestinian life characterizing the behaviour of Israeli occupying forces, soldiers shot and killed a 53-year-old man, Falah Hammad Abu Maria, and injured his two sons in the town of Beit Omar, north of Al-Khalil. Occupying forces and undercover units raided Abu Maria's home and opened live fire inside, injuring his 22-year-old son, Mohammed, with two bullets in the pelvis. When Abu Maria attempted to aid his injured son, soldiers shot him twice in the chest, killing him in cold blood. Abu Maria's other son, Ahmad, age 25, was also injured with bullet shrapnel in the chest. Israeli occupying forces later injured eight mourners as clashes erupted after Abu Maria's funeral.

A day earlier, occupying forces shot and killed 21-year-old Mohammed Ahmad Alawneh with a live bullet in his chest during an Israeli raid in the town of Burqin, west of Jenin. Yesterday, 27 July, another Palestinian teenager lost his life to this depraved Israeli violence when occupying forces executed Mohammed Abu Latifa, age 18, during a so-called arrest raid in the Qalandiya refugee camp. Israeli soldiers detained Mohammed after shooting him in the feet, then shot him in the chest and tied him with electrical cords. Forensic evidence reveals that some of his body parts were also fractured as a result of the assault by soldiers. Abu Latifa was killed by the occupying forces and did not fall from a rooftop, as Israeli soldiers falsely claimed. Abu Latifa is the eighteenth Palestinian to be killed by Israeli occupying forces this year in the West Bank; four civilians have been killed since the start of this month.

We also regret to inform you that Israeli occupying forces also continue to kill and injure Palestinian children, carrying on defiantly with the abuse and violation of child rights in spite of the warnings in the recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. On 3 July, Israeli soldiers shot to death a 17-year-old child, Mohammed Hani Al-Kasbah, near Qalandiya checkpoint. Video and forensic evidence concluded that Al-Kasbah had been shot in the back at close range after

throwing a stone and then running away from troops. The killing of Mohammed brought unbearable tragedy to his family, which had already lost two younger sons, Samer, age 15, and Yasser, age 11, to the brutality of this immoral occupation. "Every day there is a martyr, not just in our family, but for all Palestinian families," the boy's father, Sami Kasbah, said, recalling the moment he learned that his son had been killed. "Someone is hurt, someone is killed and someone is arrested. This is what happens; that's the occupation."

In another example of Israel's deliberate and condemnable policy of targeting Palestinian children, occupying forces shot and injured a Palestinian child, Amjad Farouq Abu Khalid, age 17, with a live bullet to the leg as demonstrators were dispersed during the weekly peaceful protest against Israel's illegal settlements and wall in Kafr Qaddum village, near Qalqiliya, on 24 July. A day earlier, a Palestinian child, Yahiya Al-Amudi, age 10, lost an eye after being shot in the head with a rubber-coated steel bullet by an Israeli soldier near a military checkpoint in Shufat refugee camp, in Occupied East Jerusalem. The boy was subsequently hospitalized with a fractured skull, jaw and left ear. He had surgery to remove his left eye and remains in critical condition.

Such Israeli assaults against Palestinian civilians continue with total impunity. Records indicate that since the start of 2014, Israeli occupying forces have injured an average of 35 Palestinians every week. Civilian casualties also continue to be caused by the near-daily terror acts carried out by Israeli settlers. On 1 July, settlers attacked and injured 60-year-old Mahmoud Saleh Nofal from the village of Ras Karkar, west of Ramallah. Nofal was surrounded by a settler mob, who assaulted him with pepper spray and violently beat him with rods, causing bruises over his body. In another incident on 7 July, a group of terrorist settlers attacked the Masri family as they were travelling from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. Their car was attacked by settlers, who threatened them with a knife and assaulted them. Among the people in the car were the elderly Masri father and a pregnant 30-year-old woman, who suffered a state of extreme fear, resulting in a miscarriage. Israeli settlers also continue to routinely intimidate the Palestinian civilian population, especially farmers and herding communities, impeding access to their farms and fields, vandalizing and destroying Palestinian property, especially agricultural land and olive groves, and severely marring the landscape and destroying livelihoods.

Israeli media have also been increasingly inciting violence against Palestinians by publishing advertisements and commissioning articles encouraging occupying forces to kill Palestinians. A racist campaign dubbed "0404 Broadcast" encourages Israeli soldiers to kill Palestinians without question. One poster in the campaign exhorts: "If you feel the slightest danger to your life from stones or a Molotov cocktail, do not think twice; do not hesitate; just kill." We hold the Israeli Government responsible for all of these crimes, provocations and incitement and the rabid culture of impunity in which Israeli soldiers and settlers so abhorrently assault Palestinian civilians and violate their rights and dignity. We continue to call for perpetrators to be held accountable for these crimes against the Palestinian people living under this merciless, illegal foreign occupation.

Here, we must also again raise alarm about Israel's illegal settlement campaign, which is severely destroying the Palestinian Territory's contiguity and fragmenting and isolating Palestinian cities, towns and villages into disconnected Bantustans throughout the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which

has been virtually cut off from its natural Palestinian environs. The occupying Power continues unabated its illegal construction of settlements and the annexation wall, confiscation and razing of Palestinian lands, demolition of homes and forced displacement of Palestinian civilians. In contempt of the will of the international community and in blatant rejection of the two-State solution, Israel is entrenching its colonization and occupation of the Palestinian land, in grave breach of international humanitarian law, as well as international criminal law as articulated in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, with total impunity.

In this regard, we recall that 9 July marked the eleventh anniversary of the authoritative advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Wall, in which the Court called on Israel to cease construction of the wall "including in and around East Jerusalem, dismantle the sections already completed, and repeal or render ineffective forthwith all legislative and regulatory acts relating thereto". Yet, Israel persists with its unlawful construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and continues to carry out and impose countless illegal measures comprising the Wall's associated regime, in flagrant disrespect of the advisory opinion and grave breach of numerous provisions of international law.

Susiya village symbolizes this long-standing illegitimate colonial policy in Occupied Palestine. The village has been displaced three times in the past 30 years, and its Palestinian residents again faced forced transfer as the occupying Power is advancing plans to demolish the village's 80 structures, including homes, a clinic, animal shelters and storerooms, many supported by international donors over the years. This illegal action, intended to facilitate further encroachment by the nearby illegal Israeli settlement and settlers on Palestinian land and rights, would displace and dispossess at least 340 Palestinians, already Palestine refugees forcibly expelled from their homes in 1948 and forcibly displaced again in 1986 and 2001, enduring recurrent displacement across generations. Nasser Nawajha, a Palestinian Bedouin of Susiya, has stated: "My father was expelled from his home in 1948; I was expelled from where I was born in 1986. I don't want to see this happening to my children."

This destructive and illegal Israeli settlement campaign, especially in so-called "Area C", which constitutes 60 per cent of the West Bank, has forcibly displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians from their land, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. From 2006 until June 2015, Israel demolished at least 876 Palestinian residential units in the West Bank alone, forcibly displacing 4,105 people, including at least 2,011 children. Nearly 500 Palestinian structures, including homes, were demolished in "Area C" over the past year alone, displacing 969 Palestinian residents. On the grim situation of Susiya and other Palestinian villages in "Area C", the Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Robert Piper, recently stated: "Susiya is emblematic of a pattern of injustice that is repeating itself across many parts of the West Bank. Too many communities are coming under multiple threats and intimidation — by legal process, by bulldozer, by settler violence — to relocate completely or relinquish surrounding agricultural and grazing lands on which their livelihoods depend. The international community cannot stand by and witness these acts in silence."

In a similar situation, the Israeli Government has delivered dozens of eviction and "stop-work" orders to Palestinian Bedouins in the Abu al-Nawwar village, east

of Jerusalem, in a plan that would affect the homes of 40 families. The Palestinian Bedouin families were notified that they must move to the Bawwabat al-Quds area within a month. The area is on the outskirts of Abu Dis, where the Israeli occupation plans to forcibly transfer Bedouin families currently living in the so-called "E1 zone", which covers some 12,000 dunams (12 square kilometres) north-east of Jerusalem and west of the illegal Israeli settlement of Maale Adumim. The so-called "Maale Adumim Plan" aims to completely separate Occupied East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, in grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, notably articles 49 and 33.

All such actions further prove Israel's deceit about any intent to end its illegal occupation of the State of Palestine. Israel remains unwilling to stop its settlement activities in compliance with international law and the international community's calls for a complete cessation, and remains unwilling to stop Israeli settler violence and terror against Palestinians, instead aiding, abetting and protecting settlers in the perpetration of these crimes. Israeli government officials have compounded such provocations and incitement by displaying total disrespect for Israel's obligations under international law and disregard for the unanimous demands to immediately freeze its illegal settlement campaign and save the two-State solution. Just one example suffices to convey this point: on 23 July, Tzipi Hotovely, Israel's new Deputy Foreign Minister, delivered a defiant message to the international community, stating: "This land is ours. All of it is ours."

Such actions and messages must not remain unheeded or unaddressed. Israeli leaders must be held responsible for their words and deeds that are seriously undermining the efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to this conflict and further destabilizing the situation, to the detriment of both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and threatening peace and security regionally and globally. It is imperative that the international community take the necessary measures to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease all of its illegal policies and practices, including with regard to the sensitive and volatile situation in Occupied East Jerusalem. We appeal to the Security Council in specific to give immediate attention to this dangerous situation and to act now to uphold international law, including as articulated in relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, to salvage the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and to salvage the prospects for peace and security.

This letter is in follow-up to our 547 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 9 July 2015 (A/ES-10/684-S/2015/521), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed against the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, for which it must be held accountable and the perpetrators be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations